

Exploring the inner realm in the company of others

Developing learning approaches to globally responsible leadership

Nick Ellerby

Exploring the inner realms in the company of others

I am 20 this year and I am extremely afraid of the dark. Everyone keeps telling me though that there's nothing in the dark that's not in the light. But for people like me there is. I sense that there is something in the dark and that's what scares me. Usually there's nothing there if someone else is around but sometimes there is. It is strange that there are so many people afraid of the dark and what is in it. It must mean something. I never realized that so many people shared my fear. Maybe there really is something to fear. Or maybe we are all just letting our imaginations wander into this scary place of darkness of no light. I hear some people are just more attracted to light and that might be it too... I wish whatever it is that it goes away.¹

A paper on

- the need for the development of the inner path for globally responsible leadership and
- peer learning approaches as representing one of the possible ways forward

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Note

I offer at this stage a gentle warning to the reader - I am a development facilitator and a core contributor to an organisation that focuses on a human relations and peer approach to learning. The approach and style may take some effort and for this I don't apologise but simply set the challenge ahead!

The beginnings of the 'why' of developing the inner life is touched under sections 1 - 6, the 'how' of developing the inner life (7 - 9) focuses on an approach rather than a range of techniques and exercises. Many start off with great intent and inspiration and then dissolve into offering the way forward within the current 'training' system - espousing a great why, but resorting to a traditional how. Attempted here is the suggestion that the system for learning needs to alter and for that to occur enough individuals need to be willing to explore new and uncomfortable dimensions of their practice and themselves.

I see the paper as a departure point for discussion and development rather than a finished piece.

ROAD LESS TRAVELED

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth

Then took the other as just as fair
And having perhaps the better claim
Because it was grassy and wanted wear
Though as for that, the passing there
Had worn them really about the same

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet, knowing how way leads onto way
I doubted if I should ever come back

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence
Two roads diverged in a wood
And I took the one less traveled by
And that has made all the difference

Robert Frost

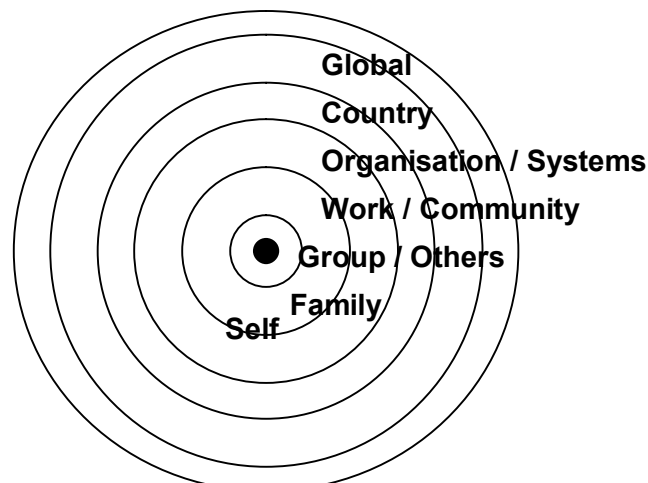
INTRODUCTION

At a meeting of the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative, the ethics and integrity group talked of developing the inner life of the individual as part of the process of internalising globally responsible consciousness and behaviour.

Circles of Relationship

We looked at the idea of a person having layers of consciousness about the world around us and the world within us.

For instance,



As Bryce Taylor has previously commented, there are at least five major areas of influence a person has a relationship to. They can be detailed as -

How I relate to:

- Myself
- You
- Them - others in a body - group, family, team etc.
- Systems and organisations
- The planet and cosmos

No one is conversant with them all, some of us will be better at some relationships than others, none of us are experts, all of us are learning.

Bringing more of ourselves

When we work with others or bring ourselves to work, we tend to only show part of ourselves. When we want to influence others we determine (consciously or less consciously) what realms we are going to talk to and speak from. For instance when trying to awaken CSR in others, we might focus on the cost to business of the lack of CSR, we might talk of the impact on the person's children or grandchildren if CSR is not addressed, we may attempt to call to their sense of justice, faith or freedom or we may resort to stimulating fear in relation to the consequences on their own health and well being. Whatever mixture we offer, we are hoping to influence the way the other person thinks and feels about the topic and so by impact on their intentions and future behaviour. The more of ourselves we dare bring to the process, the more likely we shall meet more of the other person. The more we bring of ourselves, the more chance there is of our own development also - for many this is a risk. However, it is in this whole person to person meeting that we have the possibility of becoming more of who we can be in the world. The more the shifts are held at the inner level of the self in a conscious and sustainable form, the more potent the changes are likely to be. The more we want to be aware of 'who we are', 'who we are becoming' and 'what we want our contribution to be' the greater our commitment needs to be to exploring the light and shadow of our own inner life and path.

Recently I met with an international consultant who works in a variety of contexts at the most senior levels, he commented that so many people make decisions that they think are rational, and yet when explored more deeply are more related to their familial and past personal experiences than the actual circumstances that are being faced in the current situation. The more the person has the opportunity to uncover some of the influences on their lives and to diminish some of the blocks to choice the more the person can bring their whole self to the work - this however takes courage and the space to develop a relationship to their inner life.

In the emerging new global context there are many who consider new formulations are called for to develop a sustainable future. Those in the GRI seem together in considering that traditional approaches to developing responsible business leaders are not meeting anticipated future need and that tinkering with current methodology risks re-creating in a different guise what we already have. Just as the answer will not solely be in changing the system we operate within, nor will it be only in the development of the self. What maybe called for is a more holistic development process - one that reaches more of the parts that other processes do not reach!

It is clear that to develop the level of consciousness required to make a coherent diagnosis of the dilemmas and choices which we are facing is not a quick process,

nor is it one that can rest on how we already operate. When a person doesn't differentiate sufficiently between what they operate within and who they are, they tend to unconsciously identify themselves with the role or aspect most dominant. For many this results in a sense of 'who I am is what I do', and any deeper exploration is considered both unnecessary and irrelevant. Even if the person has a developed consciousness, there is the potential for seeing any self development as 'navel gazing' in a world where what they are doing is working well enough.

However, it seems that increasingly in a global context, where systems and ways of operating are no longer working or in some cases never existed, individuals do need to develop autonomy of action and a stronger sense of self to shape the future in a way that honours their own participation as well as that of the others involved. Without this capacity, individuals risk being lost in the crisis of systemic failure, seeking someone else with an answer to carry them through the problems to a new solution - an option that is unlikely to find real commitment and ownership of either the thinking or practice.

Working with others

There are always those heroic individuals who consider they have the answer, whereas what we are calling for are multi-faceted groupings to attempt to work out together responses to the questions we face that do justice to the complexity and ambiguity of the circumstances without being lost within them, or if lost, are able to know they are. Whilst some activists may hold up the system as being the key to the future, those with a more humanistic orientation may look to the potency of people as the key to changing the world. What may be called for is some integrated approach where neither dominates but rather a dialogue is created that fosters new and holistic approaches to learning and development. It could be argued that many current approaches live out a one sided aspect of the whole picture - this inevitably leads to shadowy areas which we might refer to but tend not to explore. We all have areas that are in shadow - the question is to what extent do we have the courage to bring more light on these areas?

Inner and outer

When we consider what primary ingredients come together when we consider leadership, we can separate them into two areas. There are the influences which shape individuals and groups as they undertake the process of becoming who they are through life, that create the possibility or orientation towards taking a leadership role (primarily I am referring to the inner life), and there are what individuals and groups do and know, that demonstrates they are taking a leadership role - what the situation calls for, or the nature of leadership (primarily the outer life). The latter is seen in many mainstream activities with the former representing an aspect of leadership that attracts less business focus.

This document aims to touch on the *inner* or human dimension to developing globally responsible leadership and to consider some aspects of the how.

The ethics group wants to ensure that whilst the GRI examines the development model of companies and the systems they work within that we also address the developmental model of the person and the inner processes that shape our practice and life.

There are many frameworks, writings and supporting rationales that highlight for the need for the individual to face and make more visible their inner life, values and questions; to develop in them an *internal uprightness* which may be termed ethos, character or any number of other labels. It is for some a more challenging and more

complex journey that the outer expression of themselves in their working world. It moves to deeper questions of who you are, what you want, how you develop relationships with yourself, the other, the group, the community and the planet.

THE WIDER CONTEXT

Changing world

We know much about the world we are in, with any number of points of view from various viewing points. There are a range of competing ideas about what the future could hold and a myriad of suggestions about what will be required - from upbeat messages relating to 'necessity is the mother of invention' and the optimism that human innovation will triumph over human created threats to visions of getting to a point of no return and planetary diminishment within the lifetime of many of us unless action is taken now.

Whilst each of us experiences day to day life differently, we know that the way life is moving is qualitatively different. We are moving from one era into another. Whether the new era will usher in a time for renewed optimism and hope in human endeavour, or something altogether more deadly will, no doubt, hang in the balance for a long time to come, but it is happening.

From the previous work of the ethics group we concluded that existing external frameworks of understanding and agreed codes for practice are giving way. They no longer hold. They no longer offer convincing explanations or descriptions of the territory of our experience. New frameworks can only be tentative, at best, for the time being. And yet paradoxically, some realities remain much the same, some inescapable movements continue.

Development rather than Training

As the requirements of the future are no longer as attached to the needs of the past, organisations are and will be seeking new approaches to develop individuals within organisations. These forms are required to assist staff to be able to work more effectively within the overall direction of the organisation whilst being awake to the changing circumstances within their own area of responsibility and practice. This is not a matter of training per se, but rather of development. I consider training to take place as an event that gives people skills that are already known, whilst I see development as a process that creates an environment where individuals and groups think and explore about what they do, rather than simply do what they already do better. As such, training may be an aspect of development. In a stable environment, where the future is the same as the past, training is the norm; in settings where the future is different to the past and is not yet fully known, then development becomes the crucial dimension.

New Organisational Problems

In organisations and institutions the impact of the cumulative changes has begun to take effect at a new depth. Accountability, deregulation, budgetary responsibility, extreme competition², the shift of resources away from institutional solutions, have together contributed to the vital need to develop the capacity for responsible thinking and practice and to increase our understanding of the similarities and differences between the processes of change, the phases of development and the experience of transformation.

² McKinsey Quarterly, Jan. 2005.

Management and Leadership

More than ever, those working in responsible positions in our organisations have to identify clearly where those organisations are and what are the characteristics of the 'reality of the situation' in which they are placed. In order to do that there is a need to look both inside the organisation and outside. It raises important issues of choice, direction and dilemmas about competing priorities. The central purpose of the organisation, team and role has to be recast in the light of new realities. To reflect the need of organisations to look more deeply inside and out, so to do the people within organisations need to explore their own inner and outer contexts.

Ethics and values

As the ethics group have commented we think there is no single universal code of ethics for globally responsible leaders.

Ethical behaviour is not an absolute, it is an evolving process in which leaders confront ethical dilemmas with a foundation of a strong personal ethos of integrity underpinned by a knowledge of and commitment to the various codes and principles that are shaping the landscape of globally responsible behaviour. This differentiates between ethics as a meta expression of the collective and ethos which relates to the individual values of those making the decisions ie ethics held collectively, ethos and values held personally.

Integrity in this context means seeking always to do the right thing while recognising that what is right in global responsibility is continually evolving in ways that are not value neutral.

Many others reinforce this point, for instance.

In ordered and stable societies the relationships have a degree of predictability and often related to some kind of codes of behaviour or etiquette. In a society facing turbulence, suffering the as yet unknown effects of globalisation, changing work practices, no such codes are available and the agreement of what is expected is lacking. Hence the need to constantly reflect on where we are needs to become a constant aspect of our lives or we are in danger of making responses that are in appropriate to the situations within which we now find ourselves.³

In an uncertain, pluralist and complex world, one can no longer rely entirely on the norms established 'once and for all' or on codes of conduct pronounced from 'on high'. This is why it is necessary to open space in the firm and in the economic system where this ethical dimension and the concrete responsibilities that flow from it can be called forth. It involves a permanent attitude of interrogation and a collective process rather than some detailed content, prepared in advance and quickly set in stone. It involves developing a culture that will progressively influence the realization of the problems and evolution of behaviour.⁴

There is an urgent call to discover the 'answers we each carry', and one of the paramount needs is to begin to draw upon our inner resources in quite strenuous ways to make progress with the social and personal concerns that will increasingly affect us all.

³ Taylor, Bryce, *Forging the Future Together, Human Relations in the 21st Century*, Oasis Press, Boston Spa, 2003

⁴ de Woot, Philippe, *Should Prometheus be Bound*, to be published May 2004.

Leaders of the future cannot rely on others to have done this work on their behalf, they will be exploring their inner world as much as making sense of the externally changing context.

As the dilemmas we face create greater inner and outer demands and conflicts, the more we risk becoming entangled in it, the more it has the potential of distorting our thoughts, feeling and will and to drive our actions. Dilemmas and conflicts over time confront us with existential decisions, the more global or deeply personal and far reaching the more the questions can become about life itself, in material, psychological terms as well as the underlying sense of purpose.

In a global context the recurring theme is that there is no single simple answer (as much as some would like to suggest there is), many believe it will be out of dialogue and sustainable relationship that addressing greater levels of complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty will be possible.

For individuals and organisations to develop such capacities calls for development processes that are not found in many mainstream settings.

CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

We each bring different views about change and development. I want to be clear as to the meaning I attach to these terms.

Change indicates that something will be different, but that the difference may occur in any direction. It may be momentary, incremental, random, one-off or revolutionary. The outcomes may take us back or forward. It is not indicative of a particular value in relation to the outcome - neither good nor bad - simply different.

Development is a qualitative shift of 'being' manifested in external and internal ways. It is a break with the past. It is the unpredicted shift to an altogether new level of operating. It is a move to a higher order of functioning that incorporates and integrates previous functions and will be manifested in changes in organisation, structure, function and process and whilst identifiable through these differences and modifications, it is actually contained in none of them. It is beyond individual manifestation and is only apparent as a result of appearing in all of them. Some may refer to this as **transformation**.

A final word on **growth** - which indicates something will get bigger.

SOME OF THE FACTORS WHEN CONSIDERING INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

The responses we carry to the following questions will influence the way in which we make room for inner development -

- **To what extent does context determine contract** - We are shaped in our approach to the world by the environment we grow up within. The world many of us have grown up in has been influenced by a taught dominant culture. A culture that has its rules and agreed forms of behaviour. This culture impacts upon our behaviours, often out of our consciousness.

For instance⁵, the last fifty years has seen an increase, never contemplated by their parents and grandparents, in the way people know they are responsible. The shift from institutions looking after people in many countries to individuals being responsible for looking after themselves has seen a shift in how people understand and practice relationships at all levels. Once people begin to take more responsibility for themselves and their actions, the relationship to traditional forms changes. Qualities such as *authenticity* become more valued - the longing of many to feel connection with themselves and their own experience in a deeper and richer way.

- **To what extent can the individual develop** - whilst we have grown up in a specific context we can decide how we will respond to that context. That is where we step out of what has been taught and determine what we want and how we want to live - this is one of the potentially painful consequences of the development of consciousness.
- **To what extent can individuals influence the future** - a belief we can clearly carry to some extent otherwise what are the motivations for being on such an inquiry as the GRLI. We each contribute in a way that reflects the way we carry our past, present and future; each of these time frames influence the other. Similarly we bring our ideas, practices, challenges and human relations abilities to the process believing to some degree we can make a difference.
- **To what extent does consciousness create choice** - The greater the level of consciousness individuals can create, the more choice we bring to our lives. In De Woot's essay he states that 'the most enlightened are beginning to reassess the situation.'⁶ Consciousness and choice are not easy options, but they are necessary ones for those who will be involved in leadership and for those interested in developing leadership approaches; whether as followers, leaders or participants.
- **To what extent does choice create 'felt' risk** - risk is at the heart of entrepreneurial activity, and it is also at the heart of learning. Examining the inner life could be seen as risk practice for leadership. Risk at the personal level is aligned with the characteristics of creativity and imagination, the ability to challenge the commonplace, to question 'common sense' and live with ambiguity. Risk at the interdependent level is where leaders shape collaborative leadership.
- **Who is inspired** - Individuals are inspired not organisations or companies - it is individuals, often through real engagement with themselves and others, which will encourage progress. Inspired organisations usually refer to enough people carrying a flame which creates a beacon far greater than the individual contributions.
- **What limits individuals** - their imagination and their beliefs amongst other things - the social changes that are taking place around us. The complexities of the decisions people have to make and the dilemmas all of us will experience at different stages throughout our lives ensure that many of us will have to revise our beliefs or we will become more and more limited.

⁵ Taylor, Bryce, op. cit.

⁶ De Woot, Philippe, *Should Prometheus be Bound?* To be published in the UK, May 2005

When we talk of new and innovative forms of development, these arise by those willing to explore further in the learning process than others have been willing to go. Those engaged in the development of leaders and leadership (through an educational method) may need to step out of their own experiences and structures to discover a deeper and more whole approach to the person and their practice in a global setting.

- **To what extent are leaders living out peer to peer relationships-** For peer relationships to develop the individual needs a robust sense of self, just as an organisation working with another organisation calls for a certain surety about its identity, so does an individual. From studying⁷ a number of cross sector leaders an early marker was the willingness to confront individuals in authority, not through conflict but as identifying with and feeling as a peer of an individual in a position of authority. From the capacity to work as a peer flow a number of key implications.
- **To what extent is working with others required** - In a world of change and instability, interdependence is increasingly necessary if we are to move away from the heroic leader approach to a collaborative stance that honours and lives diversity, uncertainty and complexity.
- **To what extent does relationship feature in the future** - Human meeting is not only an applied activity it is one that takes place through the agency of the relationship itself. The less clear the purpose is the more important the relationship is likely to become. The more unsure I am of what is needed and the more unsure I am about whether you will help or not the more the relationship we develop will become crucial.⁸ Uncertainty is going to be the constant for the foreseeable future in the areas that will hold greatest importance.
- **How comfortable is learning about the self** - Learning about the self is not pain free nor easy - as we discover that many of the choices we think we make are not actually free, but are influenced by other experiences that having nothing to do with what we are dealing with. The way our biography impacts on our practice can be difficult to bear. Seeking in organisational life the resolution of earlier familial challenges is not unknown.

Taking these factors into account as we develop a learning process for future global leaders is no easy task. It calls for individuals and those involved in aspects of their development to embrace new ways of working, willingness to explore their own ways of operating in the world, not just in the economic and technological spheres (which are relatively easier to examine) but also the emotional and value based elements of life - elements that can often be left unexamined.

⁷ Gardner, Howard, *Leading Minds*, An Anatomy of Leadership. Harper Collins, 1997

⁸ Forging the Future Together p.16

THE CHALLENGES CREATED BY EXAMINING THE UNEXAMINED LIFE

As time passes more and more people recognise they are never going to be prepared for the world that is emerging. Only continuous forms of engagement with learning of some kind will help them retain the mental agility, the emotional flexibility and the steadiness of understanding to keep pace with the way their lives are moving.

Despite a number of the companies represented in the GRI having their own origins in the spiritual traditions, the reference to Socrates is not intended to suggest a module in spiritual enlightenment as part of Developing Globally Responsible Leadership.

It is however to raise the question, 'to what extent is a person or group able to demonstrate and model globally responsible leadership without having taken some time to examine their own inner motivations, sources of inspiration, values and nature?'

It is well understood that examining our life reveals out of consciousness patterns of behaviour. Deeper reflection yields understanding of the ways we run our life and without increasing consciousness it is no surprise that our life can be one of repetition. The country changes but the issues, dilemmas, responses and challenges we face remain the same.

We can go through life - unless meeting with one of five choice points - with a fairly low level of consciousness in relation to the circles of relationship in the world and how we contribute to the way the world operates by our own behaviours.

Choice points:

Life transition

Personal Crisis

Experience of a new culture

Decision to enter a process of individual development

Spiritual experience

We can build our intellectual capacity and our ability to act, we can know what there is to be known, do what was thought impossible, but that does not mean that knowing and doing are enough to make good decisions. Good decision requires three primary aspects of human engagement:

- Thinking
- Being
- Willing

Peter Block reflects this idea when he suggests that we rely too heavily on the engineers and economists and forget the role of the artists.⁹ Doing what you say you are going to do is not just about knowing it and doing it, there is an inner aspect that is beyond these two realms of being that is also participating. It is this aspect that relates to our feeling life, contributes to the development of our character, brings our soul into the equation, which is often a missing dimension in leadership development. Where it does exist it is applied as a separate element - we have yet to shape a development process that brings together all aspects.

GETTING YOUR OWN HOUSE IN ORDER

It is easier to tell you who I was in the past, or who I will be in the future than who I am in the present. The first is dead, the second ahead and the third so dangerously alive that I need the other two to distract me from thinking of the waste I am making of what I am, because I do not want to know.

Internalising global consciousness and responsibility will call for more than a behavioural approach (do it often enough and it will be part of your way of being) - it is the degree to which we bring consciousness to the process of building these new muscles for 'right action'. The less conscious we are of the shifts we want to make the more we simply become mechanisms within a larger system. The more conscious we become, the more we are agents of change as opposed to tools within the agency of change.

Just as we are looking to support and encourage organisations to get their own house in order by engaging with those who already have begun the process, so to is it worth encouraging individuals to do the same. In many of the organisations that are shaping new ways of working and operating, it is likely that their actions are not for some purely economic motivation but under the surface are aligned with other values and beliefs that reflect a richer and more diverse inner path of leadership¹⁰.

⁹ Peter Block, The answer to how is yes.

¹⁰ From discussions at Lafarge.

SOME OF THE ELEMENTS REQUIRED FOR DEVELOPMENT

When we want to consciously develop it seems helpful to have an appetite (impulse and commitment) for where we want to get to (future picture), an appreciation of the place that we currently inhabit (context) as well as some ideas or experience of how to get from one place to another (implementation), by what kind of route (values) and with what supplies (resources). Critically it is worth having a grasp as to the extent the place we want to travel toward is worth the effort (purpose) or that the place we are is not going to be here in the future.

What's the effort for?	Purpose
Where are we now?	Context
Appetite to move?	Commitment
	Conviction
Where to go?	Future picture
How to get there?	Implementation
Ways of getting there?	Values
	Character
What is needed?	Resources

Sometimes we may not know the answer to some or any of these, especially when few have been there before. Some aspects only emerge in the space we allow for reflection and dialogue, some only appear out of the doing, others may come to us in our dreams.

The more certainty that exists regarding the place we are in, and the greater the clarity of the place we are going leaves little for discovery except the aspects that make up the journey. The more the journey is also known, the less there is any space for new learning.

In an increasingly complex world the journey may be best undertaken in the company of others, each bringing their own contribution to the challenges which lay ahead. When the challenges themselves remain ambiguous, there needs to be at least the capacity for the group to make sense of where they now are, what they are facing and to find a way forward together. This process calls not just for understanding the external context, but the greater the levels of uncertainty the greater the need to deepen our relationship with ourselves and those we work with.

The future for global life and living is in the area of the unknown, the ambiguous, the uncertain.

In helping a person develop, the elements outlined above need uncovering and exploring - what is your purpose? where are you now? where have you been? where do you want to go to? what guiding principles do you want to work by? Who are you? Whether the work begins with dreaming the future or assessing the present is a matter of judgement and circumstance.

Just as the global context is more than the economic and technical realms, so to is the person more than their economic and technical contribution. To develop globally responsible leaders the approach to development calls for a more holistic stance; a stance that moves beyond the intentional and intellectual capacities of the person. A

developmental approach that calls for 'whole person learning', learning that addresses the mind, body and soul.

I am not going to comment on the elements of what needs to be learned in relation to the external context as that is being covered elsewhere. The focus here is the development of the self and the relationship to others. In most educational settings it is this aspect that is often under valued and under developed. It is seen by some as the missing dimension. In some situations it is adding what is not there which creates the new learning, rather than knowing more and more about what we already focus upon.

WHOLE PERSON LEARNING APPROACH

A brief outline of what could underpin the practice of a *whole person approach* will be helpful in contextualising this idea.

We would see it working out of a developmental framework, which recognises three fundamental elements within any human system:

- The people
- Their interaction
- The system(s) which contains them

We would envisage that an exploration of the way in which these three elements interplay in organisational and global life is an essential ingredient of any leader development process. Each element has equal validity and importance and should not be undertaken in isolation - this would be a challenge.

This approach encapsulates many of those attributes which leaders will likely require to create and shape robust organisations for the future. It contains the following features:

It is **participative** – within the context of already agreed parameters the participants would shape the learning process. They are involved, to a greater or lesser degree, in determining the structure, form and content of the learning.
This offers opportunities to learn how to apply influence rather than control as well as developing self management and facilitation roles.

It is **collaborative** – those involved share the decision making process relating to their learning.
Helping to develop and learn effective and enabling ways of working with others.

It is **experiential** – wherever possible content and delivery are integrated into a consistent and authentic whole.
Building on the need of managers to working with increasing levels of uncertainty and ambiguity¹¹. This aspect brings to the fore the capacity to blend thinking, practice and experience.

It involves **self and peer processes** – these processes need to be rigorously developed and practised as principal means of learning about authority, authenticity,

¹¹ Peter Drucker in the Financial Times *'The greatest challenge facing managers is the ability to work without authority and without orders'*. November 2004

transparency, accountability, power, influence, decision making and control . The peer element is a key aspect of an integrated approach.
Developing a much more accurate, authentic and honest approach to both self and other evaluation and feedback

It provides for a **developmental view of the individual in their life, work, team, organisation and global context**. This vital aspect of development learning enables people to identify themselves in relation to others and to practise the skills required to manage complexity, and to challenge the beliefs which get in the way.
In working with complexity, a developmental approach to understanding the changing picture of circumstance creates a more equipped individual for harnessing decision making.

It has the **learner at the heart of the learning** and does not create barriers between theory and practise. The participant learns through action and direct application.
In a world where the individual needs to 'take charge' of their own development, the processes utilised would enable individuals to be more willing and skilled to carry this out - through developing contextual understanding and a highly relevant learning contract align with themselves, their organisation and the wider context.

Not an easy area to approach

There are many models and frameworks for developing the self - the model is less important that finding the process by which any model can be reflected in the approach to learning. If we are talking about an interdependent future, how do we develop learning processes that reflect this collaborative and peer based practice in a meaningful way. Similarly with self-development, authenticity, cognitive capacity, emotional competence, etc. Within any process there will be facets of that which we already know, the challenge is designing a new formulation that mirrors in its very nature the uncertainties, dilemmas, ambiguities and call for consciousness that living and working in the global context demands. More than talking about it, more than thinking about it, more than role playing it, more than an exercise, but bringing the self and the associated awareness into the learning approach.

This is not just a challenge for those participating within it, it is a challenge for those facilitating the processes involved.

A challenge that asks us to go further than others are willing to go, to allow others the chance to do the same.

At this stage I am not advocating through this paper **the** answer, rather an approach that I am familiar with, and one that addresses for me many of the issues and questions we are working with.

PEER LEARNING¹²

Self and peer forms of learning transcends the more traditional approaches. This has enabled Oasis developers and facilitators to gain unique experience and insight into this style of learning.

I write about peer learning here because as an approach it has been a core of my work for over fifteen years. Working with multi-disciplinary and single profession groups to be able to allow them to develop both the inner and outer realms of understanding, experience and practice. We have brought this approach to many aspects of the working world, especially those that call for relationship to be at its core or a significant aspect.

Of course I feel confident in bringing it here as some aspects of it will resonate to a degree with the approach we ourselves are taking in the GRI to the questions we are working with. Some are also aware that Oasis is facilitating a UK 'collaborative inquiry' process that aligns with the GRI, but is more explicitly exploring the self, the leadership activity, the organisation and the global context as being the areas of focus and development.

Alternatives

There is a growing interest in alternative models of teaching, learning and assessment. In part, this is due to the growing influence of some of the ideas that are outlined here: ideas that are beginning to make their mark upon the educational world, having been around for over twenty years. In part, the interest in these ideas arises out of more instrumental and more economic motives - to get more people through more programmes more 'cost effectively'. This second group of influences is considerably at odds with the first.

Peer learning is an approach that brings with it a call to a more radical and enlightened educational practice: more a praxis. It is a way of bringing theory and practice together in the person – in the person of the learner – so the learner becomes more able, not only to shape the world in which they live more adequately, but also to have more awareness of the forces that they are working with, against and for in the choices they make throughout their life.

The approach encourages, a deeper regard for the potential of introducing more realistic and more adventurous forms of peer models of learning; a stronger recognition that educational practices reflect and reproduce the nature of the relationships between the citizen and the state, the individual and society; that the way education occurs is an implicit and very pervasive model of how many other things get done. What freedom we are encouraged to take on behalf of our own learning, how we are to manage the uncertainties of planning our own learning process, how we are to collaborate with others in a similar endeavour are things that have long left all but the most adventurous of educational environments – usually in the primary school - in favour of the more instrumental task of equipping young people to take up a place in the society that awaits.

Peer learning methods must have a future, not because we wish it, but simply because it is only in peers meeting, collaborating and exploring together that will yield useful answers to many pressing social and global problems. In the field of research, quantitative methods and participative approaches are increasingly undertaken. More and more individuals are expecting to be consulted and involved in decisions

¹² Adapted and drawn from 'The World of Peers', Oasis Press 1995.

that affect their lives. A peer approach to learning is a hugely useful way of enabling individuals to begin to manage some of the complexities, the ambiguities and ambivalences that inevitably arise when individuals are pursuing a variety of contending directions. Increasingly, groups, teams and gatherings of folk will have to work out their priorities together and will have to learn how to integrate needs, share time and arrange useful ways of working things out: but more of that in the essays.

Education, as advocated here, will never be cheap. It is highly people intensive, or, to put it more elegantly, it will always require those involved to spend time together, to meet and to engage with one another and not simply absorb the subject matter. In this respect, and others, it is at odds with the prevailing ethos of our culture: a culture that prizes materialist ambitions and that views education as a commodity to consume and then be used to advance yourself in the economic race against those around you.

The ideas outlined here are based upon a more collaborative and inquiry based method of learning, where 'how' the learning takes place is at least as important as what is learned, where education is seen as a civilising force and not only something for instrumental use. If that is true, then education needs to reflect some set of underlying values, not as external references and pious hopes, but as being enshrined within the very style, organisation and method of the learning itself. Inquiry is not something that has to await enrolling upon a Master's programme. Decisions about what and how to learn are not something to be reserved for year 10 'options'; they are a potential part of all learning activities - if those involved are prepared to meet the challenges and difficulties that inevitably arise.

Similarly, if educated people are those who are able to make distinctions and give accounts of themselves over a range of questions and activities, then some substantial influence and involvement over the direction and the standards of the work they do should be a prerequisite.

A way to develop the inner path is to shape a learning process that honours the inner life of the individual and encourages them to bring their whole selves to the process.

If sharing in the educational opportunities they experience is to mean anything vital and real to those involved - particularly those who are entering into educational development after conventional school days are over - then some form of learning contract is a must. This will enable the individual to decide their own priorities within the process they are choosing to participate within. An individual learning contract is the crucible where the major ingredients of any substantial educational enterprise come together:

- The process.
- The interests of the facilitators.
- The interests of the learning group.
- The intentions of the individual.

It is only when all parties are involved in making realistic decisions about their learning intentions for the duration of the process that there is the possibility of the whole process of learning having a different level of engagement and commitment. But it must be real and it must be managed.

In such a model there is considerable emphasis placed upon the need for *processing skills* of a high order – skills to manage the way things happen, the responses people have to what happens to them and ways of managing conflict resolution and

difference, for example. This represents a considerable shift on the part of staff. Many simply do not have these skills and may not wish to have them either. Whatever the reason, we are a long way from being able to implement a self-directed and, at the same time, collaborative way of learning in our educational establishments - and the world may not be ready either!

Those who seek to adopt a more radical stance towards the learner and the learning process may find themselves at odds with the underlying assumptions of their institution which, whatever its claims, still runs along conventional lines. Such culture clashes and conflicts of values are present everywhere in our educational system. For some it signals the death knell of civilisation as we know it, for others it heralds a rich ferment of ideas that will bring about new styles and opportunities, but which can be wildly idealistic, and there are yet others who view what is taking place with a risky sense of uncertainty. Many ideas are entertained, taken up and toyed with without clear understanding or real commitment. There is a danger of making peer based ideas and the associated call for inner development no more than another educational fashion.

Participative Peer Learning

Participative communication extends the influence open to the learner beyond the limit suggested in many models. Participative learning views the teaching and learning experience as a collaborative endeavour between individuals who stand in a relative peer relationship to one another. They do not all share the same experience, background and knowledge, but they do share an equal right to respect and consideration and have an equal right and responsibility to become involved in shaping the learning process upon which they are embarking.

Such learning and teaching follows a facilitation model in which the group and staff act as 'enablers' to facilitate the needs of the group. Such an approach clearly demands high levels of openness, trust and willingness to take risks by all those involved. In its most extreme form, the group and staff share in the planning of everything and then, as a peer learning community, the eventual outcomes of the learning process may well be largely unknown.

A Radical Approach

It is possible to work in a participative mode at several levels. At one level, participation can be of a cognitive nature, where people are invited simply to share their views on a particular topic, for example. At the other end of the spectrum, there is the **experiential** group, where each individual is fully involved in the learning process, open to experiences, contributing to the management of the group and its content, willing to share with the others in the group and to learn from the experiences. The peer learning community is the most advanced form of this. As the degree of participation increases, so does the complexity of the group and the skills required for its management. Given the institutional constraints within which most teachers and groups are functioning, a fully participative approach is realistically impossible to achieve. However, there may be important areas of the course subject matter, organisation and style that can be opened up to collaboration in a strongly participative way.

Few facilitators can be aware of how radical a position they are implicitly embracing when they describe themselves as working participatively and a good many may redefine themselves when they think through the implications of such practice. Indeed, most participative education is actually a version of the interactive approach that simply involves participants in active learning methods: participants often do not shape the content and method of the programme they undergo. Educators need to

be clear that they are actually using an interactive approach rather than a genuinely participative one.

As a prerequisite, a participative process should contain a significant measure of contribution towards its planning, design and assessment of what happens by those undertaking the programme. The power relationship of those involved should be open to examination and challenge where necessary. The contract between the parties involved needs to be explicit. Whilst the staff may well not spell out every clause, they need to ensure the boundaries of participation are clearly set and the non-negotiable part of the programme openly known. The space for participation to occur needs to be drawn clearly and then protected. Members of staff become the guardians of the spirit of the enterprise, whose own authority may be questioned and who may, in the course of exercising their guardianship, be challenged to relinquish their role.

Shift in Roles and Power

The shift in power and role relationships this demands is enormous. Members of staff stand much more in the position of enablers and facilitators, negotiators and handmaidens to the needs of the group. Skills required to offer such a resource go a long way outside the didactic range and include personal and group process skills as the bare minimum.

Staff must be at home with larger areas of uncertainty, able to offer structures but not impose them and allow groups the freedom to roam and sometimes get lost. From all this, they have to enable them to reflect upon the experience in ways that make it possible for learning to be won out of the experience. This is a tall order made no easier by knowing that they have to do all this in a human way: in a way that recognises the frailties of their own judgements at times. They need to recognise, too, the possibility that their own compulsive behaviours and distorted perceptions will interfere with the aim of clarity that they, along with everyone else, are striving toward.

The Need for Confidence

Participative learning requires considerable confidence and experience in dealing with potentially inflammatory interpersonal situations, since participants are unlikely to agree with one another over many of the issues in which they are invited to participate. Because few of us have experience working in such a free climate, we may well not have the interpersonal skills or the group dynamic awareness to make the most of the opportunity and yet without such opportunities we won't learn how to manage such situations at all. In the early stages of a participative model, learning to live with failure is an important dimension for both facilitators and participants.

Participative learning is attractive to many teachers and many learners - in theory. It seems to give learners and teachers opportunities to engage in planning and negotiating their work together in a radical way. However, this is not always born out by experience. Frequently, the participants find the effort to work through the issues involved in a participative approach too time consuming and the realisation that it does not provide simple or instant solutions can produce an atmosphere of disappointment and antagonism. Teachers who may be committed in theory to a participative approach can also quickly find themselves faced with a group of resentful and unappreciative rebels, who are far from grateful for the opportunity to contribute to their own learning.

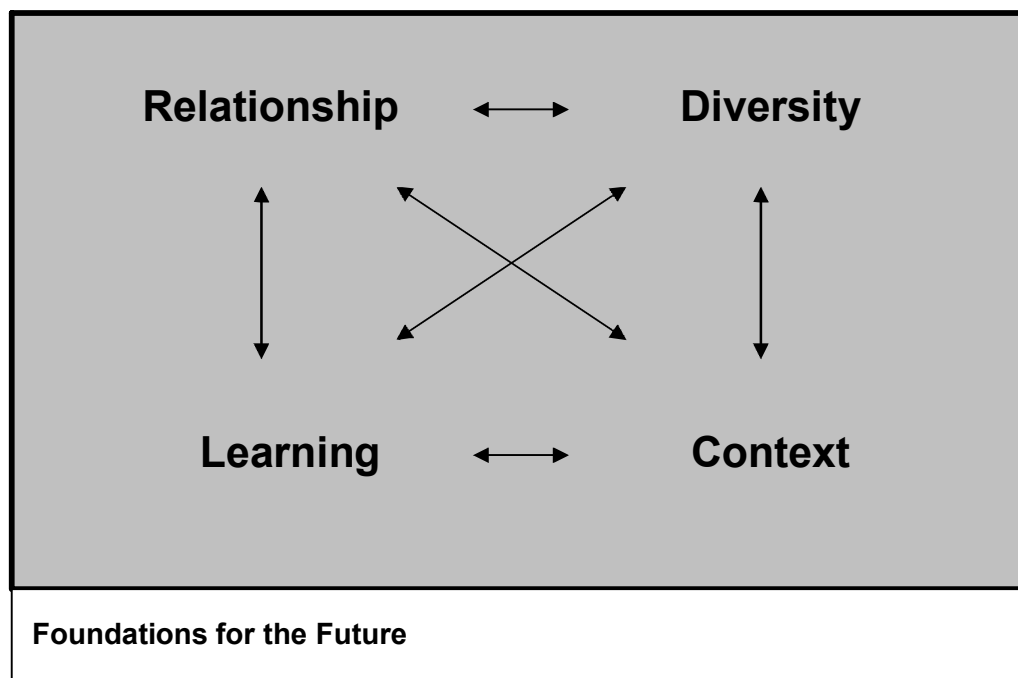
Introduced by Degrees

Elements of participative learning can be introduced by degrees and learner involvement, which is rather different, can be encouraged gradually to encompass more and more important topics as their and the teacher's skills improve. A participative approach is not an easy mode in which to work and it is one that some educators may never wish to use. However, it does offer an important source of learning for individuals and groups, who are in other respects able to regard themselves as self-determining, independent and intelligent individuals. A participative approach has to face a wide range of challenges including an examination of authority issues, the use of power and influence by individuals, the underlying values and beliefs at work, the need to develop and improve process skills in the group and the frank admission that the more participative the programme the more unknown and uncertain are the likely outcomes. All these things, amongst others, ensure that participative learning is the most challenging form of educational activity that it is possible to work within.

It also seems to reflect many of the inner requirements needed to shape globally responsible leadership.

CONTENT - THE WHAT

Content of learning processes is of course dependent on many factors - it moves us from the why and how to the what. In the arena of examining the inner life, whilst also incorporating the external issues around globally responsible leadership it could usefully include aspects of the following as foundations for the future:



Decisions taken in relation to honourable dilemmas are unlikely to be robust or sustainable without an understanding of the changing **context** that an organisation or person operates within. Context is at the heart of flexibility for individuals and groups, it is no good thinking 'what I have always done is going to be the most effective response for the next situation', the context is ever in movement and the next step needs to meet the situation, not simply be based on how we have done it before.

If a person is not able to **learn** and contribute to the learning of others, then the organisation, team or individual is trapped in the past. For individuals and organisations in an unstable world their capacity for learning and for sharing that learning becomes their advantage. Individuals who do not know how to learn have to rely on being told by others what to do and how to make sense of what they are doing. Organisations will have less and less ability to provide this form of support, indeed many will only be interested in employing the person who can demonstrate that they do learn, can help others to develop learning and can apply the learning in practice.

In a world where innovation is often necessary and new ways of thinking and behaving required, **diversity** is a key to unlocking the potential of an organisation. If we are not able to manage difference we are simply in the mode of seeking compliance and fearful of any approach that reduces control.

The area of establishing, sustaining and developing **relationship** is core within the work setting, for some managers, the managing of relationships **is** the job. When we have to blend learning and task in our day to day work, integrate with other parts of the organisation, develop partnerships with other organisations, manage increasing complexity, shape global practice, then the art of effective relationship is critical to our success and well being.

The following explores two of the latter areas in more detail.

Diversity

The term diversity has a multitude of meanings and interpretations. A working framework defines diversity as *the variation of social and cultural identities among people existing together in a defined employment or work setting*¹³. Social and cultural identity refer to the personal affiliations with groups that research has shown to have significant influence on people's major life experiences. These include gender, race, national origin, faith, life phase, and work speciality, among others (including apparently 'non contentious' examples such as age, size, accent, regional origin, etc.). Employment and work setting include schools, industry, sports teams, arts groups, third sector organisations, work teams etc.

Diversity creates questions, challenges and opportunities that are not present in homogeneous work groups. Although diversity is much talked about, it is often only addressed in relation to compliance and human rights. We see the implications of diversity as much more challenging and more enriching.

No matter where you will work, diversity is increasing. From a postmodern¹⁴ perspective less and less can be taken for granted, even in what may have appeared homogenous groups differences in perspective and approach are not only appearing more they are often encouraged.

For key players in organisational life, living and working effectively with diversity means creating environments that reduce the potential of difference being a barrier to learning and relationship, whilst increasing the possibility of diversity and difference

¹³ Adapted from work of Taylor Cox

¹⁴ Postmodern thinkers challenge the basic rational assumptions of what traditionally constitutes the purpose and practice of whatever area they bring their attention to – literature, organisations, gender, etc.

improving the effectiveness of organisational and global life. This does not make for some halcyon happy family, it creates complexities, dilemmas and conflicts that are part of the healthy fabric of organisational development.

The learning process could begin from the premise that for an individual to be part of an environment that allows difference, he or she needs to be able to express their own unique contribution. Only then can the differences begin to surface and the richness which diversity brings be discovered. This calls for a confidence in oneself and a willingness to engage with the other. The rewards can be significant as Rosabeth Moss Kanter notes in her book *The Change Masters*¹⁵. She points out that when diversity is worked with successfully high levels of innovation in organisations occur. Success equates with reducing or eradicating 'isms', developing respect for difference and creating heterogeneous groups.

In contemporary global contexts the issue of *cultural diversity* is going to be a feature of increasing presence – if they are to accommodate the vast differences that exist between people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

These differences, and the fact that the workplace is a major global institution that has to come to terms with these issues, offers organisations the opportunity to be a profound force for changing the forms that shape our society.

Relationship

The process would honour the centrality of human relations within the job of leadership, with an emphasis on understanding and balancing the task and people elements of the role (coaching, facilitation, collaborative decision-making, dialogue, partnership, conflict management, negotiation).

The relationship between people is the central point of departure for developing an understanding of the dynamics and relationship issues in whatever system, activity or endeavour they may be involved.

Without the relationship no technique works. With all the techniques in the world a lack of real concern to enter into relationship, at the level required, leaves only a richly laden box of beautiful, but unusable or superficial tools.

The process would need to focus on the skills and stages of developing effective relationships. Some models are also robust in relation to developing projects and considering systems, and as such whilst the model is applied to the self and the relationship with others, it can be transferred into other facets of the work place and utilised in a number of situations.

It is **through the relationship with others** in the process that participants are able to practice their approach, gain feedback and through relationship create more effective ways of working together.

This element covers having an understanding of the roles of the parties involved, how to establish a learning contract that means something to both parties and can be referred to and used as a valuable guide to working together.

¹⁵ *The Change Masters*, Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Simon and Schuster, 1983.

It involves having a recognition that a developmental learning relationship will pass through a number of phases¹⁶ that requires different skills at each phase if progress is to be maintained.

It also recognises that, apart from how well we do or do not get on we need to know what we are doing at any time and how we might shift or change it to improve things if we are getting stuck or fearful of the shadowy path of conscious responsible leadership.

¹⁶ For instance the work of Barrett, Kidder, Taylor et al.